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SUBJECT: ESTONIA: DOJ TRAINING FOR PROSECUTORS AND POLICE

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¶1. (U) Summary. A Post and Department of Justice (DOJ) organized workshop provided training for Estonian prosecutors and law enforcement officials on June 13-15. The training focused on public corruption, financial crime, and asset forfeiture. Estonia is relatively advanced in the region in tackling public corruption and financial crime. The training was well-received by Estonian participants who expressed interest in doing more collaborative training of this kind with the USG. End Summary.

#### Introduction -----

¶2. (U) Post and the Department of Justice's Overseas Prosecutorial Development and Assistance Training Division (OPDAT) organized a three day training workshop for more than thirty Estonian prosecutors and law enforcement officers, June 13-15. The workshop's themes were public corruption, financial crime, and asset forfeiture. U.S. trainers and Estonian prosecutors provided presentations on their respective programs and activities and participated in several case studies. The Estonian Prosecutors Office praised the training and expressed interest in additional training collaboration between the U.S. and Estonia.

#### Public Corruption -----

¶3. (U) During the workshop, the U.S. trainers were impressed by Estonia's progress in combating public corruption. Estonia's efforts, modeled on Finland and Sweden, have included making politicians and GOE officials' financial statements (e.g., tax returns) available to the public. Since 1998, Estonia has risen from 26th to 17th on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). (Note: Latvia ranks 49th and Lithuania 46th on the CPI. End Note.) However, Ministry of Justice (MOJ) officials noted that a recent MOJ study found there is still room for improvement in Estonia. The report (discussed in more detail reftel) found that 3% of the public had given a bribe in the last year. Among entrepreneurs, 12% had given a bribe. However, Estonians generally hold business and political leaders to a relatively high standard.

#### Financial Crimes -----

¶4. (U) According to Estonia's Prosecutor's Office Act, the Prosecutors Office participates in planning investigations of financial crimes. As the lead agency in criminal proceedings, Estonian prosecutors guide the preliminary investigator in cooperation with Customs and Tax, Security Police, Central Criminal Police, and other relevant

agencies. U.S. investigators work closely with the Central Criminal Police (CCP) and the Prosecutor's Office on financial crimes involving U.S. victims. The FBI has worked several cases jointly with the Estonian police which have resulted in multiple arrests in Estonia. In 2006, there were two joint-cases with one case -- a cyber financial crime racket -- leading to eleven arrests. This case is now in the Estonian courts. (Note. According to the FBI, the number of financial crimes involving the U.S. is much lower in Estonia than in neighboring countries. End Note.)

#### Asset Forfeiture

15. (U) The workshop's final subject dealt with asset forfeiture, which is a relatively new concept for Estonian prosecutors and law enforcement. Asset forfeiture legislation was recently adopted into Estonian law after lengthy debate on its constitutionality. Due to historical sensitivities during Soviet occupation when property and assets were seized, the GOE has moved very cautiously in this area. For example, there has been no discussion or debate in GOE fora on whether or not to use seized assets to augment funding for law enforcement programs. However, GOE interlocutors informed us that they plan to utilize asset forfeiture in combating organized crime, principally in seizing property that was bought with laundered money or used for criminal activity.

16. (U) Comment. In a post-workshop briefing on June 19 with the Estonian Prosecutors Office, the Estonians told us that the officials who participated in the workshop found the training interesting and useful. They also recommended that future workshops include even more actual case studies. As Estonians are by nature reserved, (especially when speaking a foreign language), case studies are particularly useful in encouraging active participation.

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